

## Progress on Goals of Executive Order #12898 on Environmental Justice

### Increased public participation and access to information (Section 5-5)

Ensuring that public documents, notices, and hearings relating to human health or the environment are concise, understandable (including translated as necessary) and readily accessible to the public is a basic tenet of the Executive Order. Indeed, many of EPA Region 9's small grants have been used to fund translation services for public meetings or health risk information or towards the production of multilingual outreach materials. These are some of the projects we have funded to increase public participation and access to information.<sup>1</sup>

- The El Pueblo Clinic in Tucson Arizona hired and trained 10 Spanish speaking residents as Community Health Advisors to implement the *Entre Nosotros* outreach program. These *promotoras* (community-based health educators), went door-to-door in the community adjacent to the Tucson International Airport Area Superfund Site working to educate families about potential environmental health risks from exposure to TCE, the primary toxic contaminant of concern to residents surrounding the Superfund site.

- *Kupa'a Mahope o ka Aina: Workbook for Environmental Justice for Native Hawaiians* outlines the major environmental laws that affect Native Hawaiians and provides guidance for Hawaiian communities that want to participate in the State's environmental decision-making process.
- A consortium of organizations met monthly and created *Building Upon Our Strength: A Community Guide to Brownfields Redevelopment in the San Francisco Bay Area*. The guide is a model for community participation in the Brownfields debate nationwide.
- Sonora Environmental Research Institute, Inc. in Tucson, Arizona produced and distributed bilingual educational materials about household hazardous materials to the schools and residents of Santa Cruz

County. These materials can be used in other Spanish or English speaking communities throughout the United States.

- In San Diego's Barrio Logan neighborhood, a small grant to the Environmental Health Coalition supported bilingual community workshops and training for 10 promotoras. The Promotoras participated in a series of meetings with local government officials who had formed a task force to investigate the impacts of mixed use zoning in their neighborhood. EHC provided simultaneous translation at the workshop and at local government task force hearings. Three of the Promotoras also won seats on the local redevelopment Project Area Committee (PAC). The Promotoras and their allies forced the first public election of members to the PAC in years and community attendance at the PAC meetings remains high. This was a major step in reclaiming the PAC from control by interests from outside the community.

### Subsistence consumption of Fish and Wildlife (Section 4-4)

Historically, there is a lack of consumption data on subsistence fishing or hunting populations in the United States. In addition, new immigrant communities are often not aware of the particular risks involved in consuming high levels of fish or wildlife in their new environment.

A priority in the Executive Order is to collect and analyze information on consumption patterns of people who rely principally on fish or wildlife for subsistence and to communicate to the public the risks of those consumption patterns. Unfortunately, scientists often have difficulty getting accurate information on consumption patterns of subsistence fishing populations because of language barriers or the reality that new immigrants often have a fear of government or unknown researchers. The following two projects illustrate how the work of public agencies can be improved significantly through partnerships with community based organizations:

- The Asian Pacific Environmental Network's (APEN) 'Richmond Laotian Fish Consumption Study' clearly demonstrated that communities and local residents can do good science — and contribute to environmental policy decisions that impact



<sup>1</sup>For a synopsis of any of these examples see Appendix A. Some of these projects are also featured in even greater detail under 'Success Stories.'



PODER

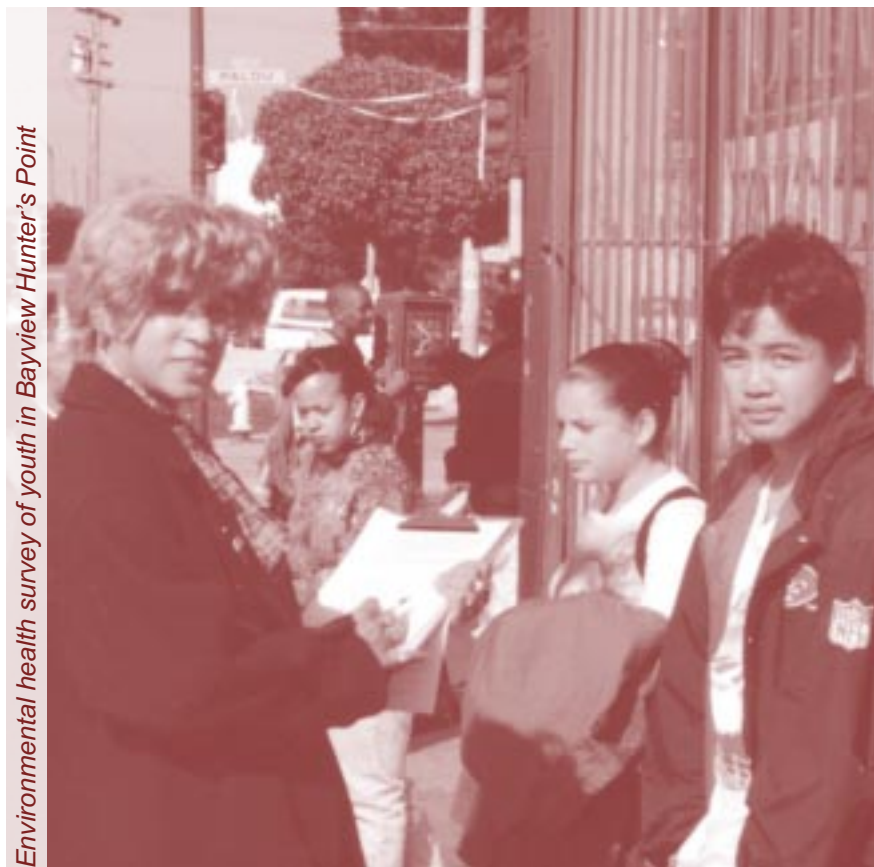
their lives. APEN worked with the local Laotian people to design and conduct a survey of fish consumption patterns of the larger Laotian community. Through this unique and truly community-based approach, including scientific peer review, APEN was able to get a very high response rate on their survey and an accurate assessment of the fish consumption levels of this community. The results of this survey are critical for a wide range of policy decisions, from fish advisories to water permits, and have already affected technical decisions and Clean Water Act Policy in Region 9.

- Save San Francisco Bay Association's Seafood Consumption Information Project developed multilingual outreach material aimed at educating subsistence fishing communities about the potential health risks of eating fish caught in San Francisco Bay. The organization distributed health warning brochures in Laotian, Vietnamese, Korean, Cambodian, Spanish and English, as well as a video showing step-by-step directions on how to prepare fish in ways that minimize health risks.

These projects demonstrated that community-based organizations, which often have the necessary trust and credibility with the community, can more effectively reach that community and produce reliable scientific results. These projects illustrated how the research capability, data, and expertise of community-based organizations and residents are critical for agencies to consider in order to make accurate and informed policy decisions.

### Human Health and the Environment (Section 3-30)

Another priority of the Executive Order is to include diverse segments of the population in clinical studies and research efforts, in providing education about multiple and cumulative exposures, and in informing people about potential risks.



Environmental health survey of youth in Bayview Hunter's Point



*Recent graduates from EHC's SALTA Program proudly display their diplomas.*

- A number of *promotoras* programs employed and trained Latina women to provide in-home education about environmental health risks specific to their communities. Grants to the Environmental Health Coalition, El Pueblo Clinic, California Institute of Rural Studies, La Clinica de la Raza, Project Concern International, and California Rural Legal Assistance supported outreach relating to health impacts from exposure to pesticides, household hazardous materials, toxic contamination of ground water, drinking water contamination or other specific health risks.
- The Environmental Health Coalition in San Diego proved that the *promotoras* model works. On a pre-training test evaluating their knowledge of environmental problems and how to participate in local government, more than half of the *promotoras* scored under 70% and only 10% scored over 90%. At the end of the program, the *promotoras'* scores improved 37.5% on average — all of them scored over 70%, and 80% scored over 90%!
- Asian Immigrant Women's Advocates provided environmental health information in several languages on protection from hazardous materials in the workplace. This effort has helped educate Asian women electronics workers about the particular environmental risks associated with their work.

While the work of some of the projects supported by EJ Grants can add new challenges for some of EPA's programs or those of other state or local agencies, EPA Region 9 recognizes the value of involving community-based organizations in defining solutions to complex policy issues. This unique program creates links between people who often have different perspectives not only on how to solve, but also on what constitutes, an environmental problem. With the help of these grants, communities define what they consider the priority environmental problems and participate in planning and implementing a solution.

#### *BorderLinks*

